

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 DHA-02 OIC-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 HEW-04 AID-05 /080 W
-----020959 109359 /10

P 020901Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9602
INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2373

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UN, SHUM, NI
SUBJECT: UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING--
GENEVA, FEBRUARY 7 TO MARCH 11, 1977

REF: (A) STATE 24394 (B) STATE 36388

1. ACTING DIRECTOR MEA'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT
ZUBAIRU TOLD POLCOUNS AND VISITING AF/W OFFICERS HOUDEK AND
LOLLIS FEBRUARY 28 THAT U.S. INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS IS WELCOME
DEVELOPMENT. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, ZUBAIRU VOLUNTEERED THAT
THERE HAVE BEEN SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA AND
SUGGESTED IT IS TIME AFRICANS BEGAN TO SPEAK OUT ON THE ISSUE.
UGANDAN SITUATION SPECIFICALLY CITED.

2. ZUBAIRU ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IT IS EASIER FOR NIGERIA TO
SPEAK OUT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN UN FORA RATHER THAN AT AN
OAU MEET. THIS ATTITUDE IS REFLECTION OF NIGERIAN AVERSION TO
DISCUSSING INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF BROTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES.
AS MEA OFFICIAL NOTED, ONE CANNOT DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS IN A
COUNTRY WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THAT
COUNTRY. SIMILAR POSITION ADOPTED BY DEPUTY DIRECTOR AFRICA
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DEPARTMENT LAST MONTH, WHO, WHEN DISCUSSING NIGERIAN REACTION
TO PARTICIPATING IN A REVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EQUATORIAL
GUINEA (76 STATE 252337), TOLD POLCOUNS THAT FMG WOULD HAVE NO
OBJECTION PROVIDED THAT REVIEW WERE NOT CONDUCTED IN BILATERAL
NIGERIAN-EQUATORIAL GUINEAN CONTEXT. AFTER ALL, HE NOTED,
HUMAN RIGHTS OF MANY OTHERS IN ADDITION TO NIGERIAN LABORERS HAD
BEEN AFFECTED BY MACIAS GOVERNMENT ACTION.

3. COMMENT: FMG COULD BE EXPECTED TO WELCOME U.S. EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS GIVEN ITS ATTITUDE ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE. NIGERIA BECOMES SOMEWHAT SQUEAMISH ABOUT GOING ON THE RECORD, HOWEVER, WHEN ISSUE INVOLVES INTERNAL POLICIES OF FELLOW OAU MEMBER STATES. WHILE WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT MANY NIGERIANS PRIVATELY SHARE ZUBAIRU'S CRITICAL VIEW OF AMIN'S RECORD IN THIS AREA, IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR FMG OFFICIALLY TO HOLD THAT VIEW. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT NIGERIANS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ANY DEBATE INVOLVING BLACK AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. NEITHER, HOWEVER, NEED WE ANTICIPATE NIGERIAN OPPOSITION TO DISCUSSING THE QUESTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, POLICIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LAGOS02373
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770071-0623
Format: TEL
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197703102/aaaadltq.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e74888ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 24394, 77 STATE 36388
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2942015
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING-- GENEVA, FEBRUARY 7 TO MARCH 11, 1977
TAGS: SHUM, NI, AO, UN, (ZUBAIRU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e74888ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009